

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

November 19, 2002

7:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Lopez.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Gatsas, Guinta, Sysyn, Osborne, Pinard, O’Neil, Lopez,
Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Thibault, Smith and Forest

Absent: Alderman Wihby

Mayor Baines advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Baines requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Harold Levine, 49 Hillcroft Road, Manchester stated:

Each Alderman should have a copy of a letter that I am going to read. After reviewing the last Board meeting a couple of weeks ago and seeing what was going on, I finally had to sit down and write a letter and the reason I passed these out was...most likely most of you people put it in file 13 but I will be back in a couple of weeks to...like they do with the schools STS and see if anybody has looked at this.

Mr. Mayor and Members of the Board of Aldermen,

I have spoken in the last two months at the Aldermanic meetings in regards to the raise in our TAXES. In the past I’ve made mention to the fact: you people DO NOT listen to the Taxpayers of this City which was proven correct after watching last week” meeting on TV. Only ONE Alderman did their homework in suggestion to lowering the taxrate. This remark also pertains to the Mayor’s Office. Control on spending was NOT a part of the last administration towards the end and this administration has NOT tried.

Here again are some of my ideas which I have brought to the attention of the Mayor and Aldermen in the past:

1. Consolidate City Garages and start a Motor Pool. This could possibly eliminate cars and trucks. In 1998 which was the last consultants review, the cost of \$70,000.00. How many city vehicles are used for personal use? One example is the Police Department for excess spending. Their cars are serviced at State Motors-Lincoln Mercury at the rate of \$73.00 per hour for labor alone. How many other garages are enjoying the taxpayers money?

2. All City Vehicles should have decals; many DO NOT. The city renting 40% of 555 Auburn Street for \$100,000.00 or more a year instead of utilizing empty city buildings. How many more deals like this are, we, the taxpayers paying for which are unknown? S.T.S. transportation, non-profit agency, can't our city bus company provide the same transporting? Is the School Department sending out bids for the BEST price of a job? Need to alleviate the top-heavy non teaching positions and concentrate on the need for teachers in the schools.

3. Why is Manchester Housing Authority leasing part of their warehouse at Pine & Merrill Street to S.T.S. which was paid by the taxpayers to build? No one tells the deal that was made at the expense of the taxpayers? Does anyone recall the extra MILLION at the expense of the taxpayers to remove contaminated soil after the rosey picture painted for the Civic Center?

It is time for the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to stop covering for Political Appointees and City Hall. The city garage at the Center of N.H.; the revenue is going to the Verizon Arena, why aren't the City & the Hotel sharing?

I believe the people on this board are NOT representing the taxpayers of Manchester, but take the chair to obtain the Medical Insurance, along with some School Board members for a total of \$100,000.00. This money should be going towards Education. This is definitely something the new Charter Commission should look into for elimination.

Very truly yours,

s/Harold Levine

Don Welch, 811 Dix Street, Manchester stated:

I come to you tonight with no disrespect or personal attacks on any Alderman. I come here tonight to personally attack policy. I think the mistake that all of you made with the exception of one Alderman last week in voting for the stadium...first of all I want to tell you that I am opposed to any type of taxpayer funded arena, stadium or anything that has to do with the entertainment business. The mistake you made last week is you set a precedent. You are going to have contractors now from this point on developers and contractors who come into this City and it has already been known...I learned this through my brother in Florida that Manchester is a hot bed for activity and unfortunately his friend is a financial banker. What that tells me is that the precedent you set last week by spending...you can't back out of this deal. You can't back out now because you are on the hook for \$250,000. This stadium developer is getting \$250,000 of taxpayer's money and that is the fact. Now granted he or his company did \$600,000 or \$500,000 worth of work or whatever they said they did with the environmental studies and everything else and planning but the fact of the matter is from this point on any developer who is going to develop anything in the City of Manchester is going to want money up front for their services and that is not the way that this City has ever done this in its existence. It sets a real bad precedent. I hope you people reassess this avenue that you have taken. I see Alderman up here fighting over \$30,000 or

\$50,000 for schools and different expenditures and everything else. Your credibility is shot when you dole out \$250,000 with no recourse with respect to these developers coming in here.

George Sylvester, 1520 Belmont Street, Manchester stated:

I am a rookie at this. This is my first Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting. First and foremost I am against the City spending or allocating any taxpayer's money for the building of a baseball stadium. I want to quote the newly elected governor of the State of New Hampshire, "we first take care of needs then we take care of wants." This is what the City government has to adopt – needs versus wants. Just in case you folks are lost and don't understand what this means, I put some examples of needs and some examples of wants. You don't have to go very far in this City to look at the schools and we have to get rid of these trailers. I don't have any children who are school age at this time but if I did I would be irate about having my kids go to school in a trailer. Repair the streets and roads. They are awful. Snow removal and sanitation, these are all needs. Affordable housing for low and middle income, affordable health insurance, take care of fixed income people, seniors citizens so they can afford to live in their houses. Investigate the possibilities of bringing new industry to Manchester to create good paying jobs and improve and expand mass transit. I never see the City spend money to go find industry or go find jobs. We seem to spend money on entertainment and I think this is not a need but a want. The wants fall into baseball stadiums, executive condos, petting zoo, train station...we don't even have a train that I know of and we are going to build a train station, new clubhouse at the Derryfield golf course, new swimming pools. Those are some of the things that we really don't need at this time. They are wants. Just a couple of other things. We need to get spending and budget under control. The City sells no products. The only way to fix the financial problems is we have to cut expenses or raise prices. In this case, that is taxes. That is how we raise prices. Quite frankly, I have had enough of that. We need to cut expenses and get department heads to be responsible to live within the monies allocated. I think there is one other thing and that is the City garages where we are charging \$60 and our costs are \$74. I just want to know what you folks think. What is wrong with this picture? I don't understand it and you don't have to be a mathematician to figure it out.

David Fitzgibbons, 77 Wellington Hill Road, Manchester stated:

I am a concerned taxpayer of Manchester. I operate a small business in the City and neighboring towns. I am very concerned that the elected officials of our City have lost or misplaced the recipe for fiscal responsibility. My concerns are based on the following: the recent 8% property tax increase imposed on the backs of the taxpayers of this City. The City continues to subsidize the monthly parking fees at the City garages. These fees should be raised to cover the true cost to the taxpayers - \$73.86/month. I am sure that the attorneys and bankers and others who lease these spaces are not going to pull up stakes and relocate out of our City. the baseball complex proposal – not one dollar of taxpayer funds should be used to finance this complex. Our City officials are discussing a \$20 million taxpayer contribution

to fund this project. This is outrageous. To quote a recent *Union Leader* article related to the baseball complex “Weber O.K. if Baseball Strikes Out.” The City will pay Mr. Weber \$250,000 if the City owned stadium does not go forward. This on top of a \$35,000 appropriation to study the feasibility of building a baseball stadium in Manchester. As you know, capitalism is based on risk and reward. Why are the taxpayers of Manchester providing a \$250,000 golden safety net to Drew Weber? I strongly urge our City elected officials to find that recipe for fiscal responsibility. I remind them to heed the mandate given to our Governor-elect, which was based largely on fiscal restraint. We need to fix our basic needs before we entertain our wish list. Thank you very much.

Howie Howe, 525 Wilson Street, Manchester stated:

The reason I am here tonight is because I have come here to protest against the City getting involved in other high priced development using the people’s money. In the 14 years I have been in this City, I have yet to see you guys reject any way to spend major tax money. There are no miracle projects that will rejuvenate Manchester instantly. What is a reality is that your ruthless spending sends taxes soaring and soon many of our residents may have to relocate because they can no longer afford to live here. Our City leaders should not be looking to fund private sector projects with public money. If the developers of the baseball park, hotel and condominium project believe that they can make money here in Manchester, let them put their money up as would be required by any other business. Business ventures that are sure things do not need public money to survive or establish themselves. If they need to use Gill Stadium because they can’t get theirs built fast enough, then let them rent it from the City and pay for the relocation expenses and accommodations needed by the teams who currently use it. As for the railroad station, just which stand are you going to build to? You have three separate rail passenger propositions on the table right now and each may require a different plan so there is no way to be sure that if you build one it is going to fit and without a firm commitment by anybody to bring rail passenger service to Manchester why are you even considering building it? Allocating space for one is good planning but building one without knowing the physical requirements of the service it will accommodate is irresponsible. I sincerely hope that Manchester gets rail passenger service to Boston in the next 10 years but I oppose spending one dime on a station until there is a need for one or even a plan to build to. Outside of funding normal City services within established budgets, I believe we need to include a provision in the future Charter that will require any project requiring City bonding or use of tax revenues in excess of over \$1 million to become ballot issues. If the leaders can’t make sound financial decisions, then it is time to let the people make them for you. Thank you.

Billy Dodd, 181 Mammoth Road, Manchester stated:

I ask for a little indulgence. I have had the flu for a couple of weeks and the voice doesn’t come out quite right all of the time. Let me start off by congratulating Mr. Jabjiniak for the work he has done for the riverfront development. He did a lot better homework than the previous group did on the civic center but in the current MOU you already have us on the

hook for \$250,000 whether anything goes down there or not. So you need to look at that a whole lot. Off the top, snooze and we lose, into the future in a puff of smoke. The first one, there was an interesting article in the *Boston Globe* on November 9 regarding SMG indicted by the Worcester County Grand Jury for skimming money off of tips at the Worcester Centrum. I would check the books at our civic center. A *Union Leader* article, with all due respect about some Aldermen who don't get involved. Alderman Sysyn and Alderman Pinard, please get involved. It is my tax money and other citizen's tax money that you need to be asking questions on any proposals that come before this Board. Into the future, the civic center contract. Several years ago I never came before this Board and said the civic center was a bad idea. I said the contract stinks. Redo them. If you look at the MOU that was signed for that, when you take the luxury suites, the club seats, the parking and 40% of the rest of the seating and the management fees and incentive fees and the \$1 surcharge on the ticket that we can't get and everything else, conservatively and these are very good numbers, they made a profit of \$3.5 million with no exposure and if we get the \$400,000 that was alluded to in the paper that comes out to a 9:1 ratio. We lost tax money in the City and they are walking away with 9 or 10 times more profit out of the civic center than we are. Mr. Gatsas, you wouldn't go into business with anybody like that and I used that same phrase years ago. You wouldn't go into business with anybody for those returns. The \$400,000 that might be coming back to the City, a couple of things that you might be able to do with it...I agree with the idea of one time purchases and not putting any extra revenue from the civic center into the budget. Buy the Chief a couple of new cruisers that he needs. Maybe Alderman Pinard can use some of that money and pave Mission Avenue. Those people had to get variances and put in paved driveways to a dirt street that you won't accept and pave. Absolutely ridiculous. You got Market Street paved out here. Surely you can do Mission Avenue. Thank you.

Larry Constantine, 39 Devco Drive, Manchester stated:

To pay this developer for the baseball stadium \$250,000 has to be utterly ridiculous. If you are going to go into business and this fellow apparently is or wants to, then he puts his own money up or finds private enterprise like I did years ago in New Hampshire and I am sure some of you people may have done. \$250,000, a quarter of a million dollars this guys walks away with for nothing, absolutely nothing. That is all I have to say.

Jeff Kassel, 22 Appleton Street, Manchester stated:

Sometimes I feel like Al Pacino in *Godfather III*. I keep trying to get out and you guys keep trying to pull me back in no matter what I do. I am now Chairman of COMP, Citizens Opposed to Multi-Million Dollar Projects and like a lot of people here I am getting tired of the mindless boosterism in this City. Manchester is not and unfortunately probably never will be a destination city. This is a mill town and it is a mill town with bad management and a lot of the City is blighted and a virtual slum. This is true because leaders of this City are more concerned with building outrageously expensive civic centers and baseball stadiums instead of maintaining the buildings and roads and schools that they already have. This plan

to bond a \$25 million baseball stadium is another attempt to punish and bankrupt the taxpayers of this City and this is after the largest property tax increase in my memory. The tax increase is 8%. The inflation is a little over 1%. We are getting a tax increase far in excess of the rate of inflation. This week I conducted an informal poll at the whirlpool at the YMCA where people of every social strata congregate and every single person I asked in that whirlpool is against this project and against this payment. You don't have to be Bin Laden to be a terrorist. The Mayor's Office and every Alderman except Mr. Garrity are committing economic terrorism against the taxpaying people of this City with reckless projects that cost tens of millions of dollars. The boosters of these projects insist that they are hilariously successful but no hockey or baseball team has ever stayed in Manchester and these bondings and loans don't just go on for 10, 20 or 30 years, they go on for eternity because when the principal comes due the City just bonds that amount again. I kind of doubt that the Monarchs are going to be here for eternity. I want to leave you with two final thoughts. Aldermen should never have voted to give that developer \$250,000. That has already been stated many times tonight and it constitutes a rape of the people who have to pay the bills in this City. Finally, no one in their right mind would pay \$200,000 or \$300,000 for a luxury condo facing the river next to a baseball stadium with all the traffic, buses, garbage, noise and crowds as they are trying to drive to their expensive condominiums. This is a very dumb plan and I think the people who voted for it are going to pay the political price. Thank you.

Joe Kelly Levasseur, 866 Elm Street, Manchester stated:

I wasn't planning on speaking but I have to defend you guys a little bit here. I can say that I live in a very nice City that I think is very clean and has been improved upon over the last 10 years or so at least. I am glad that we can sit here and have a discussion about the fact that someone wants to come in and spend \$75 million or \$77 million or their own money. I always believed that the civic center would be the catalyst for that. I don't think that Manchester has any major slums. I think we have done a good job cleaning up the inner City. I respectfully disagree with my friend, Jeff Kassel who seems to think that this place has really gone to hell while I think that it has actually made incredible strides in the last couple of years. The only thing I would be a little bit worried about obviously is that an 8% tax increase is not something that I think the City of Manchester or the property owners really need to have, especially after revaluation where a lot of revenue had come in. I would just rather sit here and defend you guys a little bit and say that I think we are heading in the right direction. As far as the baseball park goes, I am proud to say that this is a Democratic Board with a Democratic Mayor and I don't think you have seen any of the Republican party coming out and trying to play political resistance games. We have been cautiously optimistic hoping that it will work out and that it will be in the best interest of the City as a whole and I trust this Board to do its due diligence and continue on the path of making this City a fine and safe place to live. Thank you very much.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Garrity, duly seconded by Alderman Smith, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business was presented and on motion of Alderman Garrity, duly seconded by Alderman Smith, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk